

To whom it may concern:

The possibility that cellular phones and other cellular technology is being considered for inflight use greatly alarms me. Below I note two specific events that happened to me personally during my career as a flight attendant for United Airlines:

1. Approximately ten years ago while working a full 757 from Chicago to Kansas City I received a call from the flight deck on the interphone. This is very unusual as it was just a minute after takeoff and is a critical stage of flight when all communication between flight deck and cabin is avoided, safety concerns and medical emergencies being the exception. The pilot asked that I investigate whether a cell phone was on in the cabin. I made an announcement and it turned out a passenger just two rows back from my seat had forgotten to turn her phone off. It was stowed in her briefcase and she wasn't conversing on it. The flight was very hectic as the flight time was short and the cabin full. By the time we landed I left the aircraft to catch a flight to Denver and didn't get a chance to ask the pilots what exactly was happening in the flight deck that made them suspect cellular activity onboard. Something very relevant and urgent must have been taking place for them to place a phone call just seconds after we had left the ground. I was glad that I experienced this incident first hand or I might have been skeptical about the story. Since then I encountered another flight attendant who had a very similar experience on another flight (she experienced it first hand).

Just last summer I was flying the "lead" flight attendant position and was making announcements during taxi-in at O'Hare Field. United had recently allowed the use of cell phones during taxi-in. Looking down the aisle from my jumpseat at the front of the plane I noticed carry-on bags in the aisle. I made TWO announcements for the owner to please remove bags from the aisle as we had not yet arrived at the gate. Getting no results I left my jumpseat and walked halfway back to discover that the bags belonged to a passenger in the overwing emergency exit row and that because she was engrossed in her cell phone conversation she had not heard either of my announcements. In fact, she was so tuned out to her surroundings that when I bent down to push her bags back under the seat in front of her she struck me because she must have thought I was going to steal her property. She was totally unaware of what was happening around her. I can only imagine the nightmare scenario if an emergency evacuation had been necessary. This was a very unsafe situation.

Also, let me add that it is no secret how distracting and annoying some cell phone users can be while out in public. From booming voices to loud, obnoxious ring tones the public is assaulted by impolite cell phone users on a regular basis. The rudeness is noticed when it is across a room or at the next table. Imagine just for a moment that you are seated inches from one of these people on your next flight...sharing the same armrest. Tensions would be high. The cabin would be ripe for confrontation, anger and violence. Believe me, there is a noticeable difference in cabin atmosphere from the time of boarding when people are permitted to use their phones and taxi-out and flight, when cell conversations are not permitted.

If people need to be in touch with the world below they will use the airphone.

The pros and cons on this subject are so obvious that it is amazing the idea of inflight use of cell phones is even under consideration.